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OUTLINES OF PHILOSOPHIC EDUCATION.

Of complex Themes.

It will not be necessary to enlarge on the rules which logicians have recommended for the management of complex themes, the general object of which is to confirm the truth of propositions by argument or evidence, and to establish the truth of causes, or the certainty of relations. The most important of the rules required for conducting both kinds of themes are the same, in so far at least as the object of both is the attainment of clear notions, lucid arrangement, and perspicuous expression. The special rules which relate to the management of these themes, may be shortly enumerated. That no propositions but such as are important and probable, can form proper subjects; that the meaning of the subjects and predicates of the proposition, be accurately fixed and freed from every degree of doubt or ambiguity; that the extent of the affirmation or negation be distinctly ascertained, that the proposition be stated in the most intelligible manner, and the subject divided according to the logical rules of division:—That the attention of the student be next directed to the kind of evidence by which the proposition is to be established; that the arguments are to be so arranged as to support each other, and be introduced in such order as that those which precede shall throw light on those that are to follow, and form a connected chain of comparisons, by which the agreement or disagreement expressed in the propositions shall be made manifest. It may often happen that some of the intermediate arguments or proofs may themselves require illustration. These must be brought forward in their proper place. Finally, all objections against the proposition must be explicitly and candidly answered; and the proof be concluded with a recapitulation of the united strength of all the arguments which have been brought to confirm it.

It is impossible to prescribe rules which shall exactly accord with the variety of subjects which may come under this order of themes; and therefore much is necessarily left to the judgment and capacity of the composer in particular cases. Though he cannot properly apply rules of demonstration, yet the method and certainty of it ought to be his standard as the best and most irresistible method of gaining admission to the ascent of the mind. He must imitate the Geometrician, in first attempting to establish with clearness, the principle or datum on which each deduction rests. The reasoner, however, on general subjects, cannot fol-

low closely the demonstrator, because a demonstration consists of one kind of data only, whereas the proof of a probable proposition may admit of various kinds of argument, each of them adding something to the strength of the probability, till their united strength be sufficient to determine the ascent of the mind.

That the student may be aware of the different grounds or principles on which deductions, in probable reasoning may rest, he is directed to have recourse to consciousness, common sense, experience, axioms, intuitive propositions, analogy, testimony, FACTS ALREADY PROVEN, AND THE UNDEVIATING LAWS OF NATURE. These the student should apply as the particular case may require; and in order to a right application of them, his attention is first directed to some of the most approved specimens of sound reasoning. One of Cicero's Tusculan questions, or one of his paradoxes, the 6. for example, is selected—*Solum sapientem divitem esse*—and the student is required to state in writing the data from which the deductions or conclusions are taken, to specify the different kinds of evidence by which the leading proposition has been supported, and to characterize the illustrations which are adopted, they may be also required, in such exercises, to appreciate the number, strength, and importance of the respective arguments, and the precise extent of the conclusions which they warrant. It is obvious, that the frequent occupations of this kind, suggested from former studies, or from such other species of reasoning as may fall within the reach of the students, must be a good preparation for those of a higher order, when a subject or proposition is proposed which they are required to confirm or establish.

The following subjects have been prescribed: "Logic is a useful study—"Youth is the season of improvement"—"The hand of the diligent maketh rich"—"Personal talents and virtues are the noblest acquisitions" Other subjects may be prescribed in the form of questions. What are the great obstacles in beginning a course of Philosophic Education? What are the advantages of Literature? Is the institution of prizes, in places of education, useful? Do holidays promote study?—Sometimes, again, the students are required to execute comparisons, between public and private education, between the diligent and careless students, between a town and country life, between the syllogistic and inductive mode of reasoning, &c. It is presumed, that these occupations, constantly and regularly practised, must tend to accustom the mind of youth to investigation, and

not only to enable them to find the materials, but to put them together, and to express them in the manner best adapted to the end which they have in view.

It may be said, and we are sure it will be said, by the swarm of teachers who do not know any better, that youth, during the time they are permitted to attend our English schools, cannot possess sufficient knowledge or materials to write upon any of these subjects; but, if perfect or finished compositions were expected, there might be good grounds for entertaining that opinion. But, on the other hand, it is abundantly obvious, that, if students did not begin to compose on any subject, until they had obtained a complete knowledge of it, they would never begin at all. The season for forming that important habit would thus be utterly lost. In all cases, perfect specimens must be preceded by many unsuccessful efforts. An eminent writer has candidly acknowledged, that he would be ashamed to disclose the many unsuccessful attempts he made before he could produce any thing worthy of public attention. Imperfect then as the first exercises of the students may be, they constitute the natural and indispensable steps which lead to higher degrees of perfection; and to whom can such imperfect attempts be so properly submitted, as to a teacher who can direct how they may be rendered more complete? Besides, these subjects have all of them their easier and more accessible parts; and it is moreover in the power of the student to add to his knowledge by reading and by reflection. He may be said to begin his work with the small capital he has already acquired, and to trust also to that which, by assiduity and diligence, he may afterwards realize. Nor ought the difficulty of the execution to be altogether remedied. It must be allowed to press upon his mind, not indeed with such force as to break his spirit, but so as to rouse his faculties to powerful and continued exertion. "*Possunt quia posse videntur.*"

In the course of our strictures, we have dwelt much on the importance of elementary instruction. A practice of more than thirty years, in a numerous and highly respectable school, has convinced us, that the modes of teaching the English language and composition, as generally pursued, are radically erroneous. The learner, after seven years drilling over the various pronouncing Spelling Books and Dictionaries, is, perhaps, able to spell, but not to understand, even the leading words in the page. He may spell *crucifix*, *caravan*, and *category*, and guess one time out of ten, the local sounds of the vowels, which are most agreeable to the teacher's uncultivated ear, and, at last, triumphantly, utter the *grave* and *acute* accent. We have often been much amused to hear the clownish pronunciation of *nater* for *nâte ure*, *poople* for *pupil*, *dooze* for *does*; *ed e ka shun*, for *ed-u ka shun*;

wertoo for *virtue*, *werry* for *very*, and a thousand others which were thus *mumbled*, *squeezed*, or *whined out*, both by teacher and pupil. Such inattention and vulgarity are shameful. There can be no excuse for a teacher's being so grossly ignorant. The scientific works of Mr. Walker will assist him to correct his errors, and enable him to pronounce the words of our language correctly.

The time which is *frittered away* in learning and repeating the *paltry technicalities*, crammed into elementary books, and leading to error, would, if properly managed, not only make the learner better acquainted with the *spelling* and *pronunciation* of words, but would prepare him for *composing* passably, and for understanding the grammatical structure of the language. Besides, this process would induce such habits of *thought* and *discrimination*, as would lay the foundation of extensive future progress. In the American school class books, a great variety of exercises and examples in *approximate etymology*, is inserted; but the useful and necessary art of *phrase* and *sentence-making*, is the paramount object in view. Based on nature's laws, and followed out, as they have been, by the immortal *Condillac* and *Pestalozzi*, the child learns to *spell*, *read*, *think*, and *compose*, with as much ease as he repeats the names of the visible objects around him. He reads the sentence, "I see myself in the looking-glass," in a perfectly natural manner; he does not hesitate, he understands it; he uses words to name his ideas. Instead, therefore, of keeping children, year in and year out, *spelling* and *accenting*, and *guessing*; teach them to *spell* and *read sentences*, and *compose for themselves*. This will create habits of attention and improvement, and by degrees prepare them for commencing a higher order of themes.

The great utility of this method has, of late, been abundantly verified, not only in teaching youth in our common schools to read and understand the nature of written language with wonderful facility, but it is of singular use in teaching the unfortunate *deaf* and *dumb*. It is a fact, strange as it may appear, that there are young people in the Asylums at Hartford, in Connecticut, and in the city of New-York, with only one year's instruction, that can write a more connected and sensible letter, than many others of the same age who are blessed with the faculties of hearing and speaking, and who have been much longer under the discipline of instruction, by the common method pursued in schools. These facts are before the public; and to test our remarks, we appeal to parents in general, and request it as a part of their duty to examine their own children, even in the simplest specimen of composition, and, we trust, they will be convinced of the truth of our observations. We hesitate not to say, and we believe it, that in the great mass of schools throughout our country, not one

pupil out of twenty, of fourteen years of age, can put a sufficient number of words together to make a correct sentence. If this be the case, and we affirm it is, what is the use of so much time, expense and labour being devoted to the mere repetition of words, when on the principles of *analysis* and *synthesis*, the learner would be able, under the care of judicious instructors, to compose correctly, and to test his own productions by the rigid rules of grammar, in less than one half the time usually occupied in acquiring a knowledge of this branch of learning. The *combining system*, as it may be called, of teaching *thought* and *language*, when rightly understood, and experimentally acted upon, will, we doubt not, create a new era in the elements of philosophic education, and be the means of removing one of the most formidable barriers to the acquisition of knowledge.

In the progress of recent improvements, two popular methods of instruction are before the public, that of Bell or Lancaster, and Pestalozzi. The former purposes, that one *child* should teach another, and thereby save expense. This, as it respects economy, is well enough; but it is rather doubtful whether this system can ever be called in competition with the latter, which embraces all the excellences of the former; besides, it conducts the learner through the most *systematic process*, to the highest and most exalted branches of science. The child is not left in the hands of a monitor who is little wiser than himself, but he is conducted by an *interrogatory teacher*, who is not only a companion in study, but one who has accumulated a fund of knowledge, and acquired the art of communicating it to others. By the *Pestalozzian method*, the learner and teacher become alternate instructors, as far as the learner's knowledge will enable him to proceed; but when the pupil is at a loss, his teacher, at all times, is ready and able to give him the most simple and satisfactory explanation. In the Lancasterian schools, a vast improvement might easily be adopted, without increasing expense, by qualifying and introducing *interrogatory monitors* or sub-teachers, whose duty it should be to ask questions and give answers to the scholars in the classes over which they preside, in all the branches which are taught. This would, at once, break in upon the *passivity* which pervades all these schools. The child repeats what he is told, without knowing whether it is right or wrong; the monitor goes by his *class card*, but seldom thoroughly understands it. Thus, "*the blind lead the blind.*" But by the *Pestalozzian method*, the child is always put in a situation, in which he is compelled to exercise his reason. A question is put to him, the answer to which will enable the teacher to discover whether he has any ideas of his own on the subject or not. Thus, is the teacher put in possession of *data*, whence he may begin his instructions, and by increasing the child's capacity to comprehend, leads him by the

most natural process to understand what he learns, and to qualify him for enjoying happiness in himself, and of being useful to society.

ON THE METHOD OF DETERMINING THE MERITS OF THEMES.

THE labours and the anxieties of the students are by no means at an end, when they have executed the prescribed *theme*, nor those of the teacher, when he has delivered and finished his examination. It cannot be expected, that the difficult art of composition can be acquired by the students from listening to lectures or lessons of oral instruction, and making a few unconnected efforts to express their thoughts on paper. The execution of a series of such specimens, is the foundation on which the only effective system of discipline can be constructed; without which, neither the teacher, nor his students, can be properly said to have discharged their respective duties. What, let us ask, is the line of conduct which the master artist pursues, when his apprentice has shown him his first specimen of workmanship? He examines it carefully, he minutely compares it with the instructions he gave, and points out to his apprentice where he has done right, where he has failed, and where also he has succeeded beyond expectation. He accompanies his remarks with still farther instructions, to be observed in the next succeeding attempt. When the next specimen is produced, he makes a still more scrupulous examination, he extends his instructions to smaller imperfections, and directs his attention to nicer beauties. The teacher, if he wishes to do any good, must follow this example; and we take the liberty to add, that such a person neither understands his art nor his duty, if he does not cheerfully bestow this additional time and labour, which the circumstances of his students certainly require.

The specimens executed by the students are not all of that order which require to be submitted to the deliberate examination of the teacher. On the specimens of the first class of *themes*, he requires only that the student should read them, when called upon, in the presence of the class; and he takes an opportunity of making such remarks as occur. Those which are to undergo a more complete examination, are usually entered upon. After the pupil has been some time engaged in exercising his skill and judgment on various subjects, a greater degree of attention is bestowed upon them, and longer time is given for their execution. The *themes* must be written out in a clear distinct hand, without interlineation or correction. They must likewise be delivered at the appointed time, that another exercise may be prescribed, while the former is under examination. The Teacher carries the exercises home with him for private examination, and brings a certain number of them every day to the class, with

the corrections which he has made, and reads such parts of the *themes* and criticisms as he finds necessary. In this manner, during the session, the business is carried on; one *theme* being under inspection, and in the course of being read in the class, and returned to the students, while they are preparing another, to be subjected to the same trial, to undergo the same process of remark in private, and reading in public. The advantages of this method of instruction can scarcely be appreciated, except by those who have seen them realized in their actual experience. For example, it is impossible for the teacher to anticipate by instructions what can only be suggested by the specimens in his hand. The student, we may suppose, has exerted all his skill, and no small share of labour in the composition of the *theme*, and it now remains with the *Teacher* to appreciate his success. He thereby knows, too, what farther instruction may be required, and the student is in a favourable situation to profit by any thing that may be said. Without such, or similar intercourse, the production of the first specimens of composition cannot contribute much to the improvement of the student.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the nature of the judgments which the teacher passes on the compositions of his students, must vary according to the merits or demerits of the execution, the form of the composition, and the progress which the student has already discovered. There are two general views, however, which the teacher endeavours to keep before him in the examination of these *themes*. First, to trace the course or tenour of the student's mind, from the beginning to the end, in the introduction, selection, and connexion of his materials, that he may be enabled to point out, when he has gone astray, when he has kept on the right path, and whether he has chosen the best course to attain his end. Secondly, to observe whether the quality of the style be such as seems best accommodated to the nature and kind of the materials, and to the end in view. When the teacher returns these exercises, he delivers his judgment publicly in the class, and reads those parts of the *theme*, when he cannot overtake the whole, to which his remarks have a particular reference; at the same time, informing the author for his benefit, and that of the class, whether upon the whole the subject has been properly treated, in what points it is defective; whether digressive matter has been introduced, the rules of method properly attended to, and the language adapted to the subject; nor must he forget to point out these parts of the *theme* in which the student has been most successful, that by his public approbation of the author, he may excite the emulation of his fellow students.

The teacher may acquire, in a very little time, that sort of criticism which will enable him to make his remarks useful, and to execute it with great facility. A few hours will be sufficient to examine

as many *themes* as he can conveniently discuss the next day. A slight perusal of many of them is all that is necessary to perceive their general defects or merits. Referring to certain technical marks previously explained to the class, indicative of digression, redundancy, repetition, obscurity,—defective or ill arranged sentences,—faulty epithets,—which he fixes on the margin, the student is directed to those parts of his *theme* which require farther attention, and to the general nature of the defects which have been noticed. It must be acknowledged, that the correction of *themes* in this manner, and particularly, the exposure of defects so as not to give offence, is a matter of considerable delicacy, and requires some prudence. Young persons may be readily excused for thinking too highly of their own performances, while they are apt to be disappointed and discouraged upon discovering imperfections, where they were not expected. In such circumstances, the teacher must touch the failings with a tender hand, and in the spirit of parental kindness and forbearance. The earliest buds of spring are easily affected by the inclemency of the atmosphere; and harsh expressions, or even the delivery of them in a forbidding and authoritative manner, might prevent altogether, the farther effects of such useful and improving exercises. The instructions and admonitions, therefore, of the teacher, should fall upon the tender minds of youth, like gentle rain on the new-sown fields, and communicate both nourishment and vigour. When the teacher, in this way, lays open to youth the sources of mistake and error, and smooths the access to the sciences, their candid and ingenuous minds readily yield to salutary instruction. It is on such occasions, when their minds are rendered attentive and docile, that he has it in his power to reach the latent springs of action, to give young minds a favourable direction, and to do more good than could be done by ingenious lectures, or by severe remonstrance.

The most difficult, at least the most delicate part of the teacher's business, is the treatment of the more faulty exercises. Were he to expose them in the unqualified terms of disapprobation which they may possibly deserve, he might ruin every chance of being useful to their authors. He must be satisfied with overlooking at first, some of these faults, and neglecting no opportunity of encouraging the student to do better. The approbation which he bestows on meritorious exercises, is to many a sufficient reproof; and were the teacher to add a full exposure of defects, alienation and aversion from study would probably be the immediate consequence. The teacher, therefore, as far as he is warranted by prudence and ulterior views, must mingle some approbation even with his severest censure, and lay hold of every thing that can afford encouragement. On no account must he lose that influence which he possesses over the minds of his

students, in the use of which stands his only chance of bringing them within the reach of improvement. This regular method of appreciating the merit of *themes*, has not been much followed in places of education; but it will appear still more novel to commit the determination of the merits of *themes* to the students themselves. Yet, according to the plan of conducting the business, especially in large schools, this plan is absolutely necessary. With all the time and attention the teacher can bestow on a class, and with the expedition he can acquire by constant practice, he cannot possibly overtake the examination of all the *themes*; and yet unless the *themes* are regularly examined and brought into public notice, the attention of those students whose exercises are overlooked, will soon become relaxed, their spirits depressed, and their feelings irritated. If our *themes* pass without notice, they will naturally ask, why need we give ourselves so much trouble in composing them?—The whole *theme*, therefore, must be examined, or the plan must be given up.

This situation has suggested a method of review, which not only removes that objection, but brings with it incalculable advantages, which cannot be obtained in any other way. When the *themes* are ready for examination, the teacher makes choice of some of the students, most distinguished by their abilities and progress, and to them are committed the review of such *themes* as he cannot himself overlook. These are in the language of the class, called *examinators*, a less assuming title than that of critics or censors, and we think more appropriate than *monitors*. To each of these *examinators* a certain number of *themes* is committed, for which of course they are accountable, and which they are required to read over carefully, to examine in every part, that they may be able to appreciate their merits, and to give in a report in the form of a written criticism, attached to, or accompanying the *theme*, and signed by the *examinator*. When the *theme* and the criticism come to be reviewed by the teacher in the class, unless he finds something particularly exceptionable in it, he reads publicly the parts of the exercise on which criticisms are made by distinct references, and makes upon them such observations as he finds necessary, and returns the *theme* with the criticism to the author. If the criticism does not give satisfaction, a method is pointed out to be afterward explained, by which both the *theme* and the criticism are brought again under the inspection of the teacher.

This mode of appreciating the merit of *themes*, may appear unsatisfactory, or objectionable, but experience has sufficiently shown, that many advantages are derived from it. It has always happened, we believe, in most public schools, that the more advanced students, in some way or other, have given assistance to inferior scholars. The management of such assistance is no doubt somewhat

delicate, and the advantages connected with it, depend not a little upon the experience and prudence of the teacher. Were not the *examinators* subjected to strict discipline and control, the practice, so far from being useful, might be extremely pernicious. Ignorance, conceit, partiality, petulance, on the part of those juvenile assistants, might cause irritation in the minds of such as might conceive that their exercises had been unjustly criticised. But with the precautions that are taken, these disagreeable effects are altogether prevented. The *examinators* are publicly and solemnly appointed to their office, which is considered as highly honourable; and before they enter upon it, they are bound to discharge it according to the instructions which they receive, and from which they are made to understand that there must be no deviation whatever.

The *examinators* are first of all expressly prohibited from allowing the *themes* committed to them, to pass into the hands of others, and also from taking assistance in forming or in expressing their judgment. Again, the *examinators* are required to read over the whole *theme* committed to them, for the express purpose of fully comprehending its general outline. They are next to give an account of the method in which the *theme* is conducted, and the particulars which follow in their order, from the beginning to the end. Then they are to apply the rules of criticism which belong to that kind of *theme*, and to determine how far it has been executed according to the instruction given, and the end proposed, whether digressive matter has been introduced, or any thing of importance omitted. When they have exhausted their critical powers upon the matter or substance of the *theme*, they are next desired to extend their remarks to the arrangement of the sentences, and the choice of the epistles. Finally, they are instructed not only to report faults and defects, but also to point out those parts of the *theme* which best deserve to be read publicly in the class, that the author may be gratified with his success, and also that it may prove an encouragement to others.

The *examinators* are farther required to deliver to the teacher the *themes*, with the criticisms annexed, at the time appointed, containing distinct and obvious references to those parts of the *theme* which have given occasion to their remarks; and also to make use of the technical marks already alluded to. In the discharge of this duty, there is one rule absolutely indispensable, and which is never allowed to be violated with impunity, viz. the criticism, however just or well founded, must be expressed in liberal and becoming terms, with that diffidence and candour which are due from those who must be conscious of many defects and imperfections of their own. It is farther understood, as an obligation binding upon the whole class, that no mention whatever be made out of doors of any strictures or remarks which may have been made on the *themes*

by the teacher, or by the students, with certification that the individual convicted, can take no part for the future in the public business of the class, or receive any prize or mark of distinction, to which he might otherwise have had a just claim.

The advantages derived from this mode of criticism, suggested the idea of extending them to all the students in the class, and of affording to every one, in his turn, an opportunity of exercising his powers of criticism. This object is easily attained by interchange of *themes* prepared for examination, by committing to each student the exercise of one of his class-fellows for the purpose of criticism.—The experience which the teacher has acquired of the abilities and progress of his students, enables him to distribute the *themes* in such a manner as to render the competition fair and equal. He makes the strong enter the lists with the strong, and those of moderate or inferior abilities to engage with such as are nearly on a footing with them. There are certain exercises, which are evidently of a superior cast, which the teacher reserves for his own inspection, and also such as he perceives abound with defects, and he returns the latter with such remarks as are most likely to encourage, and to direct future efforts. The more distinguished essays, he often descants upon at great length; and draws from them lessons suited to rouse the emulation and industry of youth. In this way the spirit of emulation is not checked by great superiority of talents being thrown all on one side, and nothing is required from any individual which he is not known to be able to perform. Thus, opposed to each other, with as much equality as can be expected, every single student is furnished with the strongest motives to exert his attention and his ingenuity. It becomes a sort of single combat, in the presence of many spectators, and it has been found to produce attention and diligence in many students, when other motives had failed.

To give full effect to this method of discipline, one step farther has been found necessary. Among so many spirited, industrious young people, it may be expected that the author of the *theme* is not always satisfied with the judgment of his *examinator*, and he may, perhaps, be suspicious of ignorance, or misrepresentation, in the criticism. The more the author is conscious of ability and industry exerted in the composition of the *theme*, the more apt will he be to question the judgment which has been formed of it. To remove, therefore, every ground of misunderstanding, in a manner acceptable to both parties, and to give encouragement to farther exertions of ingenuity or industry, the work of criticism is continued. The author of the *theme* is allowed to peruse the criticism, and to return it to the teacher, with such explanatory remarks as he may think necessary; and, on certain, more important points, this warfare is carried one step farther still. But the teacher takes the first opportunity

of putting an end to this controversy, by interposing his own judgment on the subjects in dispute, to which both parties readily and cheerfully submit. During this amusing conflict, new lights and prospects are discovered, which often conduct the parties beyond their expectations. It is perfectly understood, however, that none but points of importance can be admitted to a second review.

The utility and efficacy of the rules by which these are conducted, have been demonstrated by long experience. But very few cases have occurred in which it became necessary to inflict censure for improper discharge of duty. Mistaken as the *examinators* must often be, in the remarks which they make, they always express their opinion, such as it is, in modest and inoffensive terms. When any important difference has occurred between the author and *examinator*, the teacher has ever found it easy to settle it to their mutual satisfaction. Young persons will always prove docile and reasonable, when they feel that they are treated with candour and kindness. Esteem and confidence open the minds of ingenuous youth, and keep alive a sense of obligation and of duty.

Finally, this method of conducting the *themes* and criticisms is highly beneficial, both to the authors and *examinators*; and has been found, from experience, an excellent expedient for calling forth the intellectual energies of the student. There are few situations in which young people can be placed more favourable to application and industry.—Their interest, honour, and spirit, are combined with the exhortations of the teacher, in disposing them to an animated discharge of their duty. The authors of the *themes* compose them under the impression of their being subjected to a strict review; the *examinators* employ their utmost efforts to discover imperfections and defects; and the teacher himself must acknowledge, that, by thus watching over and directing this intercourse between his students, he has derived much experimental instruction in the proper manner of conducting the business of the class.

CONCLUSION—ON THEMES.

SUCH an account has now been given of the nature and object of the *themes* prescribed and executed in our advanced classes, and also of the method of determining their merits, as, it is hoped, may enable any teacher, who approves of this plan, to put it in practice, as far as circumstances will permit. It is not to be understood, that all the subjects of *themes* which have been mentioned, are discussed in a few months or sessions. The number and variety of them are intended merely as specimens, to show that the sources from which the labour and exertion of the students may be drawn, are almost inexhaustible. Nor is it strictly neces-

sary that the *themes* should always be prescribed in the same order in which they have been explained in these essays. The teacher ought to regulate his conduct in this respect according to circumstances, and to prescribe more or fewer of one kind than another, as he may see fit.

Before we come to the conclusion of our remarks, we are tempted to propose another order of *themes*, different from any of the former. We do it, however, with great diffidence, because we apprehend it is the first experiment of that kind which has been made in teaching extemporaneous composition.

It has been sufficiently explained, that the object of all the *themes* which have been prescribed, is the acquisition to the student of clear and distinct notions, accompanied with proper arrangement, and habits of judging, reasoning, and communication. The attainment of these habits is more or less connected with premeditation and study. But, if we take a survey of the powers and habits which are required to carry on the business of life, we shall find that there are other active processes and habits than those already noticed, the possession of which is of infinite consequence, and which, as has been already remarked, are not called forth by the ordinary routine of public education.

The great talents by which the important business of life is carried on, cannot be acquired by a system of preparatory studies, but only by such exercises as tend to promote decision and despatch, to remove doubt and hesitation, and to lead the mind to seize the fittest occasions and the happiest moments for decisive and vigorous exertion. In the management of great and complicated negotiations, for example, where there are various interfering interests, requiring mutual adjustments and accommodations, with little time to devise expedients, the man of solid and methodical talents, who can only think according to a slow and regular process, is completely outstripped by the use of those superior powers by which men conceive, judge, and determine, as if by intuition. Many persons can make a set speech for a public assembly, at once argumentative and eloquent, if you give them time for preparation, but are altogether thrown out if any thing unexpected occurs to derange the train of their thoughts, and the concentration of their reasoning. But how different is this slow, methodical process, from the facility and dexterity with which the accomplished orator draws his materials, in the instant, from the most remote resources of his knowledge; or from the readiness and success with which the man of science supplies himself with appropriate arguments, and lucid illustrations, to support and to adorn his theory.

Any system of education, therefore, which promotes the development of those intellectual energies; which cultivates presence of mind, a ready command of the intellectual faculties, fertility in

expedient, spirit in the attempt, and celerity in the execution, must prove of incalculable benefit.—These important processes of mind are but little promoted by the common discipline and ordinary routine of our systems of public education; and many have doubted even how far these high intellectual energies are under the control of education at all, and whether they are not altogether inherent and constitutional.

But, without pretending to deny the great and the striking difference in the original constitution of the human mind, we think it cannot reasonably be doubted, that these high intellectual endowments to a certain extent, at least fall within the range of intellectual improvement. In proof of this, it may be remarked, that no person ever possessed them, in their highest degree, at the first attempt; while, on the other hand, we may observe them enlarged and confirmed by favourable situations and circumstances. When the experienced general served his first campaign, he did not possess that nice *tact* of fixing on a favourable field for action which he afterwards acquired. Many are the quick and dexterous processes of the mental powers which are acquired, even in the earliest period of life. The boy at first finds great difficulty in binding ideas to signs, in combining letters and sounds, which he afterwards does with a rapidity that escapes his consciousness. What quickness and despatch, in the exercise of bodily and mental powers, do even common characters display in their respective arts and professions? What rapid judgments are formed by the rope dancer, the professor of legerdemain, &c. It seems impossible to deny that the force of habit extends also to those pure movements of mind now under consideration, so as to bring them within the range of improvement. Let us next inquire what are those means of improving them, which may be included in the discipline of the school?

It is admitted, on all hands, that these processes and habits of mental actions cannot be attained either by rules and precepts, or by study and premeditation. If any thing can be done in this way, it must be by placing students in situations and circumstances which render their exercises indispensable or necessary, and in encouraging and assisting them. We cannot, indeed, anticipate the real scenes and occasions of future life, which may call forth habits of actions; but we should approach them as nearly as can be done in a system of education—and certainly students may be placed in circumstances favourable to the acquisition of these habits. This is one of those advantages of a public education, to which a private one can lay no claim. To counteract doubt, hesitation, and procrastination, in the student, the sources of so much evil and unhappiness in life, exercises should be prescribed to him which admit not of delay; questions should be asked which oblige him immediately to take his ground; and encouragement should be

given to those who discover the greatest activity and despatch. Again—to enable the student to apply his faculties to any subject with the same ease, in the presence of others, as in private, let him be accustomed to stand up in his place, to collect his thoughts, and to express them, on subjects so selected as to require him, upon the instant, to survey his store of knowledge, and to bring forth what may be necessary for his present purpose. And, as it often occurs that the student is totally discouraged from making any attempt, by the first view of the difficulties which attend it, every thing should be done, on the part of the teacher, to overcome this repugnance, and to encourage him to make a voluntary effort, to a certain extent at least, in the full assurance that his future efforts may be more successful.

Many of the subjects of exercise already mentioned, and which have been executed with study and premeditation, may be fitly employed for the acquisition of those habits now under consideration. Some of these are proposed to the class as subjects for *extempore* discussion; and, after a few moments' consideration, such students as think themselves qualified, are desired to explain the subject in their own manner. On the first opening of it, if any difficulty occur, the teacher conducts them through the first and preliminary step, and then leaves them to proceed in their own way.—When one student has concluded his account, it is asked, whether there be any others in the class who may choose to enlarge, or to correct what has been already advanced. It is necessary that the subjects thus proposed, for an instantaneous display of mental activity, should have a relation to the knowledge the students may be supposed to have acquired from books, lessons of oral instruction, lectures, and their own observation. On such subjects, they are required to collect, to arrange, and to express their knowledge, and to trust to their particular resources for the accomplishment of the proposed end.

In following up this plan, the teacher puts in requisition the knowledge acquired from the perusal of history. With a view to this exercise, in the beginning, the students are advised to fill up the time which the daily business of the class may not require, by reading the histories of rude, uncivilized nations. They are afterwards required to give an account of certain subjects within the supposed course of their historical studies. Suppose the student has been engaged in the narratives relative to rude and unpolished nations, many questions may be asked respecting their government, their arts, and their occupations. The effect of such inquiries is to accustom him to arrange and express his ideas, and to afford a strong motive to read with attention and interest.

Experience has taught us to render this exercise particularly useful to one description of students.

There are always some young persons in every class, who, either from their early years, from aversion to scientific study, from habits of idleness already contracted, or from the defects of former discipline, in spite of every effort that can be made to induce them to exertion, do not enter heartily into the business of the class; and who accordingly, though obliged to give their personal presence, are usually seen to sit with vacant and unoccupied minds, sometimes to the annoyance of their more industrious neighbours. Keeping in view this class of students, we have found it useful to enjoin more particularly upon them the reading of history, and of some chaste authors, which are confessedly within their reach, and of the substance of which a regular account from time to time is required.—Here we beg leave to make a short digression, in order to mention a book of sterling merit, and which is admirably adapted to this mode of instruction, “*THE BRIEF REMARKER*,” by the Reverend and venerable Ezra Sampson, of Hudson. This work we consider as one of the best reading books for youth ever presented to the American public. In our school we use it permanently, as an accompanying text book to Ewing's Geography and “*Tytler's Elements of History*.” These works form a valuable treasure of facts and moral truths, which ought to be indelibly fixed in the mind of every youth. We hope our professional brethren generally will examine the merits of these works, and judge for themselves. Our object is, not so much to commend, as it is to bring them before the instructors of youth, and the community at large.

But to return. In following out the plan, an easy aphorism of Lord Bacon, a maxim of ancient or modern philosophers, or a sentiment of a classical author, is proposed, of which immediate explanation is required. When the students have distinctly conceived it, they are required to take their ground, and to state, in order, the particulars which it contains. When one is not successful, another is called on to repeat the effort. The whole is concluded by the teacher, pointing out the causes of any difficulty which may have occurred, and suggesting a proper explanation and arrangement.

It is unnecessary to add, that a full and complete explanation of those subjects cannot be expected from such extemporaneous efforts. That is not the object in view. The purpose of the exercise is to accustom the student to exert his intellectual faculties without preparation—to render him prompt in expedient, and active in resource—and, at the same time, to accustom him to facility in expressing his sentiments.

On some occasions, this mode of discipline is particularly directed to the powers and habits of deduction: a probable proposition is suggested, and such of the students as think themselves qualified to take part in the discussion, are desired to support one or other of the sides of the argument,

with such reasons as occur to them at the time. The following are some of the subjects which have been proposed.

Wisdom is better than riches.

A public, is preferable to a private education.

An institution of prizes is useful.

A habit of reading novels is hurtful to the student, &c.

When any of these propositions are made after a few moments of consideration, the students are required to choose their side; when those who think themselves prepared, are called upon to maintain the proposition, by bringing forward an argument in defence of it. This being done, another is required to state the objection. The former is then allowed to reply; and other students are called upon for additional arguments and objections, till the subject be exhausted. During this exercise, an argument or objection, that may have been overlooked, is occasionally suggested by the teacher, and an immediate answer is required.

This exercise is sometimes carried on with still more formality; the students are informed the preceding day, of the subject proposed for argumentation, that they may come to the discussion with arguments and objections.

The students are required to state the arguments and objections simply and distinctly, without any thing extraneous or declamatory. It is the duty of the teacher to keep the disputants closely to the subject, to interfere whenever he finds it necessary, and to continue the dispute no longer than he thinks proper or useful. When the business of argumentation is finished, in order to secure the attention of the other students, to its progress, a recapitulation is required, from those who were not engaged in the disputation, of the various arguments and objections, which may have been advanced on either side.

It is obvious that this method has a manifest tendency to accustom the youthful mind to discrimination and accuracy in its conceptions, to a reliance upon its own resources, and to a ready command of language and expression.

Thus, have we endeavoured to lay before the friends of English education such rules and hints, as we hope may be useful in conducting the process of composition. We have had actual experience in this mode of instruction, and feel warranted in asserting, that if these principles are as rigidly, and as scrupulously adhered to, in English Seminaries as they are in the Latin and Greek, we have no doubt there would be found, young persons, possessing as much intelligence, useful learning and common sense, as in those institutions which are venerated for their antiquated forms and ceremonies. Our object has been, and still is, to establish a more rational and logical system of inculcation in our common schools, and to

abolish the foolish custom of compelling youth to pour over Latin and Greek authors, ten or fifteen years to learn how to compose a theme on the common concerns of life.

Within our own knowledge, young men have entered common schools to learn the elements of English grammar, arithmetic, geography, &c. after having been bound down eight or ten years to the Latin and Greek languages, but who could scarcely spell or read a plain English sentence. It is a mark of inexcusable ignorance and injustice in parents, to sacrifice so much of their childrens' lives to the shrine of prejudice and gothic absurdity. It is a fact, that if teachers have but a mere superficial smattering of those languages termed classical, although ignorant of every thing else, they are idolized and paid extravagant salaries. We have known teachers of this class to receive from sixty to a hundred dollars a year for teaching each pupil, but, at the same time, parents would hesitate, nay, absolutely refuse to pay one fourth of this sum for the same number of hours in teaching the branches of a substantial English Education. This is inconsistent and unjust: we view capable teachers of common schools as equally important, and as equally valuable men in society, they are in fact our most useful citizens, and ought to be more liberally paid. It would be a blessing to our country, had we more teachers of this sort, and less of those Latin and Greek pedants, whose ignorance, presumption and bad taste, vitiate our youth, and destroy all respect for that kind of knowledge which is absolutely indispensable. It is really laughable to hear the multitude appreciating the excellency of a classical education, when, perhaps, not one out of five, knows what it is: all they know about it is, that Latin and Greek belong to it; and therefore every boy that is to be greater than the village squire, uncle or grand father, must go to the *Latin School* at the expense of every thing else. To attempt to reason with parents on this most absurd practice would be useless, habit and prejudice govern, not reason. We do not wish to depreciate classical learning; on the contrary, we should be glad to see it encouraged, when it is properly taught, and when the learner has talents to acquire a complete knowledge of it. But we condemn the rage for learning those languages to the exclusion of our own. The stigma cast upon our language is such, that it is not unusual to see the teachers, and even the puling pedants of an initiatory grammar school, sneering at every item of knowledge that is not in their Latin grammar, Cæsar or Cicero. English grammar and composition are below their notice, and teachers of English, not worthy of their respect. These prejudices and ungenerous sneers are exceedingly injurious to the cause of English literature. If parents will persist in giving their sons Latin and

Greek, let them select such masters as can see and hear and teach those languages correctly, and infuse into the minds of youth, liberal and generous sentiments.

In taking a view, however, of the vast improvements in the means of instruction, and the encouraging support held out, we hope to see the day when men of talents and integrity will turn their attention to the importance and increasing respectability of professional teachers. We are proud of the accession within our own knowledge; teachers in every section of our country are directing their attention to the science of mind, and qualifying themselves for conducting the processes of education on philosophic principles; their zeal in the cause is uniting the interest, and obtaining the co-operation of parents in the great and good work of "teaching the young idea how to shoot." This augurs well; may the American people foster these organs of intelligence, and deliberate in council on the precepts of wisdom which shall direct and diffuse universal knowledge among their children.

ON THE INSTITUTION OF PRIZES.

THE objections sometimes made to the use of emulation in systems of public instruction, are chiefly founded on ignorance; or, at all events, on an injudicious application of that most active and animating principle. Of all the faculties and desires with which the human being is endowed, no one seems more capable of ministering to his improvement, than that under consideration, for, at every period of life, and in every rank of society, its influence is manifested in the most unequivocal manner, prompting the man as well as the boy; and in the cottage, as well as in the senate and in the field, to engage in competition with their fellows, regardless alike in most cases, of the mere prize which calls them to the list, and of the labour by which it is to be obtained. The principle of emulation, indeed, seems intended by the great Author of our frame, to supply the want of action. The love of knowledge, for example, cannot create exertion, until the pleasure attending that acquisition has been, in some degree, experienced. The sense of interest too, and the feeling of duty, are not of very powerful efficacy in the youthful mind. The prospect of distant advantage makes but a faint impression, when counteracted by the seducements of pleasure, or by the arguments of idle companions; but the spirit of emulation overcomes all obstacles, and supplies all deficiencies, animates the student to the most arduous attempts, and sustains his perseverance amidst the severest labour.

And why should not the public teacher, who has so many difficulties to encounter, avail himself of the advantages with which he is thus supplied, and

follow out the path so clearly delineated to him by the very finger of nature? It is, no doubt, considered by some, as altogether derogatory to the dignity of science, that its precious treasures should be obtained indirectly, and not sought for, purely and solely, on their own account. Others again have maintained, that to excite emulation among young people in places of instruction, is only to stir up amongst them jealousy, envy, and a thousand similar causes of irritation. These opinions, however, are all so ill founded, and connected with views of human nature so narrow, and unphilosophic, that we cannot allow ourselves to waste time in exposing their absurdity; and we are satisfied, that, upon the minds of those who have had any experience in the education of youth, and who have thereby become acquainted with the more energetic springs of action in the mind of a student, these objections will make no impression but that of ridicule or contempt.

It will, indeed, be readily admitted, that the practice of giving prizes, which has long been practised in one shape or other, in most seminaries of learning, has not always been regulated by just views of advantage. In the first place, they are commonly proposed to students who have already distinguished themselves by genius or proficiency, and are already possessed of academical honours. Few or no prizes are proposed to those in the lower classes; and thus the great body of the students, including those who stand most in want of excitement, are altogether shut out from the operation of that powerful feeling, which so frequently sustains the youthful spirit in the pursuit of excellence. Again, the greater number of the prizes, proposed in our seats of learning, are confined to single *essays*, which are written on certain occasions, on determined subjects, and according to fixed rules, whilst no means are employed, or, indeed can be successfully employed, to ascertain whether such productions be actually, and *bona fide*, the works of the individuals in whose names they are claimed.

But, to be productive of general utility, the principle on which prizes are awarded in schools, must rest on a very different foundation from that now alluded to. The influence of the system must be felt through the whole establishment, extending to every description of students, and modified according to their age, progress, and circumstances. The honours and rewards attending it, too, must be bestowed on such a principle as to come more or less within the reach of every degree of talent and industry, and to excite hope and expectation in every breast. None must have reason to consider themselves excluded, but such as exclude themselves, by idleness or bad conduct. Nor must these honours be conferred for single efforts, or upon occasional instances of success but on the contrary, they must be so distributed as to be con-

sidered the reward of habitual industry, combined with talent—of regular and spirited exertion, in every part of the student's business—of general merit and eminence, in the ordinary exercises of the class—and also, for progress and improvement in the habits of composition. The great object of the *Teacher* ought to be to carry his pupils so far; and, thus far advanced, they will find themselves at once prepared and inclined to go farther.

The number of *prizes* in any class must, no doubt, be, in some degree, proportioned to the number of competitors; though this, for obvious reasons, cannot be done with perfect exactness. There must be a step within the reach of every individual; and the partialities of self-love will sometimes induce the pupils to place this higher than it would be fixed by the judgment of the tutor, and thus occasion unavoidable disappointment. In the case of literary competition, the maxim of Virgil cannot be strictly adhered to, "*Nemo—non donatus abilit*;" for it is the success of some, and the defeat of others, whence spring the interest and struggle of which the *Teacher* here avails himself, to further the progress of his students. One point, however, must be fixed, as far as the nature of the thing will permit, which is, that every individual must be satisfied, that the honour for which he is a competitor, will be awarded with the severest impartiality and justness.

It is with much diffidence, that we mention the schemes of giving *prizes*, which has long been established in our school. It is confessedly imperfect, requiring to be matured by farther experience; still, we believe, it is the first regular attempt that has been made to extend the principle of emulation to every order of students, and to all departments of study; and it is therefore hoped, that the account now to be given of it, will be received with candour, by those who may hereafter carry it to higher perfection.

This institution of *prizes*, according to the principle now acted upon, was introduced many years ago, and experience has verified all our expectations and crowned our labours with success. The principle of action, which we had brought into play, speedily manifested its good effects, by rendering our pupils more regular in their attendance, more eager in all their endeavours to excel, and by infusing into them a stronger spirit of industry and application.

In watching the influence of this principle on the youthful mind, the idea of extending the plan of prizes still farther occurred to us; this we did by prescribing, to the more advanced students, at the end of every session or the academical year, a number of prize essays, to be executed and delivered in public—of these essays the subjects are very various, as selected from the wide fields of science and literature; and the premiums, as is usual in such cases, consist of medals, both gold

and silver, of books, and, even in some instances, according to the direction of the *donor*, of specified sums of money; for, we have much pleasure in adding that several liberal minded persons, in token of their approbation of this part of our system, have supplied us with a certain amount of annual revenue, for its maintenance and extension. Indeed, we have had our *bills of merit** redeemed promptly by parents either with money or presents of a nominal value. Such parents have shown much good sense; they have at once, put a value on good behaviour and improvement which perhaps could not have been effected in any other way.—For determining on the merit of the several essays given in, a committee of professors or literary gentlemen is appointed, some time prior to the date at which the prizes are bestowed, who meet to hear them read, and who, afterwards, without, of course, knowing the names of the authors, decide formally which of them are entitled to the respective premiums. At the close of the Academical year, say the first of May or any other time selected, is the period fixed for the public distribution of the premiums to the successful candidates; and the anniversary now exhibits one of the most interesting spectacles that can well be imagined, being attended not only by the students, tutors, and professors, but by clergymen, parents, friends, and visitors. On these occasions some suitable portion of the successful essays; whether in prose or verse, are read by their authors, thus affording at once an opportunity to judge of their merits, and an additional incitement to the great body of students. But the object which we have more immediately in view in this detail is, to give an account of this institution, so far as it relates to the principle of awaking and keeping up the spirit of emulation; and, for determining the merits of the students.

As soon, then, as the students are convened in the beginning of the session, a day is appointed for explaining distinctly, to all the students, the grounds upon which they are to enter into competition for the honours which are to be conferred at the end of it, and for placing before their eyes the scale of merit, according to which their determinations, in that matter, are to be regulated. It is then particularly stated, that the *prizes* are to be awarded upon a judgment formed, in *armulo* of their diligence, proficiency, general abilities, regularity, and propriety of conduct and manners. They are informed, in short, that those students who are most distinguished in the whole business of the class, and throughout the whole course of the session, are to stand highest on the list of successful candidates.

*In a preceding No. we introduced to our readers some hints on the importance of parents and school committee's holding out suitable encouragements, not only to youth, but to teachers also. Such a policy would bring into action more talent and industry, in the province of education, than a volume of formal admonitions.

The field of competition being thus defined, and the standard of merit established, the students are requested to keep their minds steadily fixed upon the one and the other; being assured that, in the scale which measures the latter, there are several degrees, and that it is in the power of every one of them to fix his name on it—somewhere between the two extremes. In order too, that these enviable honours may be more accessible to all, and competition made as equal as circumstances will permit, the classes are divided into semi-divisions; it being understood that such of the two divisions as occupy corresponding places in their respective lists, and who can show up *bills of merit of the same amount** possess equal merit, and are entitled to the same honour, in the eyes of their class-fellows, tutors, school committies and visitors.

From the day that this arrangement is made—the path of competition is clearly marked out; the spirit of emulation begins its work, and continues to operate, in the minds of, by far the greater number of the students, until the very end of the session. Though the object at which they strain be still at a great distance, their hopes and expectations keep pace with all their labours; and often do they breathe with tumultuous feelings, the ardent wish of Sergestus, in the Trojan games:

“*Non jam peto prima, Mnesticus; nec vincere certo; Quamquam O!*” &c.

During the progress of such a varied and lengthened competition, many circumstances will occur to rivet their minds upon the standard by which their labours are to be estimated; and this reference will sometimes be made with the hope of success, and not unfrequently with the fear of disappointment. In such circumstances, the *teacher* will find it incumbent upon him to afford them, as far as he can, the means of judging with respect to the issue of the conflict. Without the gift of prophecy, he may disclose to them, what it is chiefly of importance they should know, and constantly remember, namely, that, other things being equal, those will be most successful in obtaining prizes who are most deeply interested in their present business, and who have the greatest pleasure in performing their various exercises. He will tell them, that the premiums will certainly fall to the lot of those who receive instruction with patience, and willingly submit to sacrifices, in order to improve by it;—of those who, every morning, take their places in the class, with the unfeigned desire of adding to their

knowledge and of making progress in the path of science;—of those who execute every part of their business with punctuality and fidelity, disdaining the miserable shifts and evasions of the thoughtless and idle;—of those, in fine, who when they have finished the labours of the day, can lay their heads upon their pillows, with the soothing consciousness of having done their duty. Such, in general, he will add, is the character of those individuals whose names will stand highest in the ranks of merit at the close of the session. Such is the conduct of those who are to compose the happy band with whom their *teacher* will be surrounded on the auspicious day which will reward all their exertions and sacrifices; from whose delighted countenances he will derive the sweetest compensation for his toil, and in which he will discover the presages and pledges of still greater achievements.

One difficult and very important part, in administering the system of prizes, still remains to be stated; namely, the method by which the different degrees of merit, among the students are ascertained and determined; a point in which any error with regard to principle, or suspicion of practical mistake, would completely destroy all the good effects aimed at by the establishment in question. It has been already mentioned, that the qualifications which form the ground of competition for class prizes as they are sometimes called, are diligence, regularity of attendance, general eminence at the daily examinations, and the execution of *Themes*, propriety of conduct, and habitual good manners; on these heads, it is very obvious, a judgment must be pronounced either by the tutor, or by the students themselves, as no others have access to acquire the requisite information.

It may be imagined, at first view, that the office of judge here, would be best performed by the *tutor*; but, after long experience, and much attention to the subject in all its bearings, we are inclined to give a decided preference to the exercise of this right, as vested in the students, especially those in the higher class; were the tutor to take this office upon himself, it would be impossible even with the most perfect conviction, on the part of the students, that his judgment and candour were unimpeachable, to give full satisfaction to all parties: whilst, on the other hand, were there the slightest reason to suspect his integrity, in either of these points, or the remotest ground for insinuation that he gave undue advantage to any individuals, in bringing forward their claims to the prejudice of others, the charm of emulation would be dissolved at once, and every future effort among his pupils would be enfeebled. Students are naturally very jealous with regard to every appearance of favour or partiality, in the conduct of their teacher. The ca-

*These bills have been described in No. 10 of this work page 148. It is with children as with adults, they want the present worth of their labours.—These bills when judiciously managed elicit the most powerful motives to action. Let the student purchase his number in the scale by the fruits of his application.

prices of an ambitious mind are easily provoked, and are not more reasonable in their nature than those of the lover; and, in the circumstance of which we are now speaking, the expressions of the tutor, whether of approbation or disapprobation, his smiles and his frowns are watched with keen interested eyes, by all who have engaged their feelings in the competition. Indeed, the incidents, unavoidable in the practice of teaching, which have been known to excite suspicion, are amusing, and, at the same time, full of admonition to every teacher. If he speak to one scholar and not to another, if he examine one a little longer or shorter than usual, if the remarks made on a particular essay seem to occupy too much or too little of his time, if approbation or censure, be expressed with coldness, or with more than ordinary warmth, the more jealous and peevish of the students feel their minds tortured with apprehension that they are wilfully overlooked. Even more trivial occurrences than these, prove the occasion of alarm. If an individual happen to be examined oftener than the rest, there are some who will consider such an event as a mark of favour, whilst others would view it as a plot to expose his ignorance. It may be remarked, in passing, that, to prevent such suspicion, and to do real justice to all, the tutor keeps before him a catalogue of the class, and puts a mark at the name of every student who is examined, or whose exercise is read, by which means, although they are not called upon in any regular order, every student is ultimately placed on the same footing as to his public appearance. But even this precaution does not always satisfy, or preclude unpleasant surmises.

To return, however, to the mode of determining the prizes, we repeat, that they are adjudged by the students themselves, guided and restricted by certain rules laid down for that purpose; and, as this method of decision has been regarded by some as objectionable, it will be necessary to explain it a little more at length.

The indispensable qualities of good judges, then are competent knowledge of the grounds and evidence upon which their judgment is to rest, and a firm resolution to determine on the matter before them with strict impartiality. It is presumed that the students, in these respects, are sufficiently qualified. They are every day witnesses of the manner in which the business of the class goes on, and have, accordingly, the best opportunities of judging as to the merits of their fellow-students: they have it in their power to observe the regularity of their attendance, and the general propriety of their conduct, they hear the questions which are put, and the answers which are given, their various *themes* read aloud, and the observations made on them from the chair, they have likewise an opportunity of comparing the respective merits of all the competitors, in the extempora-

neous exercises of the class; and they, no doubt, frequently hear the performances of one another canvassed in conversation, and made the subject of a comparative estimate. Besides, as every individual is, himself, deeply interested, it is impossible but that he will pay the strictest attention to what is going on around him; whilst he cannot fail to be aware that he, in like manner, is constantly observed by others, and subjected to the ordeal of daily criticism. In truth, the character, the abilities, the diligence, and progress of students are as well known to one another, before the close of the session, as their faces or their dress: there cannot therefore, be any deficiency as to means of information, to enable them to act the part of enlightened and upright judges.

But they likewise possess the other requisite for an equitable decision: for the great majority of them have really a desire to judge honourably and fairly, on the merit of their fellows. The natural candour, and generosity of youth, the sense of right, and obligations of justice, are not yet so perverted, by bad example and the ways of the world, as to permit any deliberate intention of violating the integrity on which they profess to act, or any wish to conspire together in supporting an unrighteous judgment. There is a greater danger, perhaps, that young persons in their circumstances, may allow themselves to be influenced by friendship, or personal dislike, rather than by the pure and unbiassed sense of meritorious exertion, or good abilities. But on the other hand, when an individual considers of how little consequence his single vote will be among so many, it is not at all likely that he will be induced to sacrifice it either to friendship, or to enmity. There are, however, no perfect judges in any department of human life. Prejudices and unperceived biases make their way into the minds even of the most upright of our fellow creatures; and there can be no doubt that votes are sometimes thrown away, or very injudiciously given by young students. Still, these little aberrations are never found to disturb the operation of the general principle on which the scale of merit is determined, and the list of honours filled up.

Though the Teacher takes no immediate share in their business, by giving his vote, his habitual conduct and the occasional expression of his opinions, have no small effect in forming the judgments of his pupils, and in keeping them from misapprehension and prejudice. Indeed, the maintenance of this salutary, but imperceptible influence, is an object which he preserves in view from the beginning to the end of the session. On the day, when the prizes are first announced to the class, it is solemnly impressed upon the minds of the students, that the utility of this institution depends wholly upon the purity and impartiality with which it is administered—that it rests almost entirely with themselves, whether it is to prove highly beneficial to the cause of good education, or to be rendered

useless, and positively hurtful; and that they individually have the deepest interest in the just and impartial direction of the principle, upon which the system is founded—a fair and open competition. On every subsequent occasion, too, when any reference is made to the institution of prizes, it is uniformly held up as an essential branch of discipline, and intimately connected with the success of education. With respect, again, to the ultimate determination and adjustment of these honorary tokens, the students are expressly prohibited from indulging in loose conversation with one another, and particularly from soliciting, or receiving, any promises of support. Such as are found to disobey these injunctions are considered as *academical traitors*, viewed with contempt and reproach, and if the fact be proved against them, they are subject to a forfeiture of their privileges as voters, and deprived of their honours which they themselves may have otherwise received.

The habit of viewing the institution of prizes in this light, and hearing it constantly spoken of as a matter of the first importance, naturally creates, in the breasts of students, a species of reverence for the thing itself, and a chivalrous feeling of honour with regard to the function with which they themselves are charged. There are few, indeed, who are not seen to despise every thing unfair and unequal in the competition, as well as in the exercise of their suffrage towards their class-fellows; and it is a general remark, that those who display most diligence and spirit in the prosecution of their studies, are the most intelligent and honourable in appreciating the merit of others. It is only the idle and the dissipated who are found to disgrace themselves by unfair and incorrect opinions, in awarding those honours to which they have no claim.

The nearer the day approaches on which the determination is to take place, the young students are more likely to be influenced by some of the deceitful feelings to which we have alluded, and to allow their passions to interfere with their better judgment; on which account, an opportunity is taken to impress upon their minds, once more, the principles which ought to regulate the vote they are about to give, and to divest them of every undue prepossession, to the several candidates. When the day arrives, the tutor deeply interested, as he cannot fail to be, in the business upon which they are going to enter, addresses them in terms of affection and kindness, representing to them, in the strongest language which he can employ, the importance and sacredness of the decision in which they are immediately to bear a part. In particular, he solemnly and explicitly informs them, that they must not hope merely on account of their youth to escape the imputation of rash or partial judgments; reminds them that they are moral agents, and already, as strictly accountable for actions of which they have a complete knowledge, as ever they

will be, at any future period of their lives; states to them that to deprive a fellow student of a prize to which he is fairly entitled, is not only an act of gross injustice, but of cruelty, and which cannot be palliated by the plea of thoughtlessness; assuring them that a student of emulation and proper spirit will consider it a greater injury to be robbed of well earned honour, than to be subjected to any other species of privation. He even proceeds farther than this, for addressing himself to the reverential and pious feelings, inherent in generous minds, he thinks this no unsuitable occasion to remind them that they act under the immediate inspection of the Omnicient Being, who cannot look upon crimes of any kind, but with detestation and abhorrence. With this preparation, the catalogue is called over, and the question put to every individual, is expressed in terms: "Whose name shall stand at the highest degree in the scale of merit, *inter Seniores?*" The same question is then put, *ad Juniores*; and it is repeated, until the several degrees in both scales are filled up, upon which the names of the successful candidates are inscribed, with acclamations.

Whatever doubts or objections may be urged against this mode of adjudging the prizes, the proof from experience, is a complete answer to them all. We have, at least fully satisfied ourselves, by the closest attention to this subject in every point of view. For example, on the evening of the day prior to that on which the determination is to take place, we have, every year studied the catalogue containing the names of the students, with the intention of ascertaining how far a list made by ourselves would correspond with the arrangement to be afterwards fixed by the votes of the classes; and we have to remark that, in no one instance, did our judgment, with respect to the first prizes, differ from that actually given by the students.—In descending the scale, the difficulty of appreciating degrees of merit, where it is less prominent, is, no doubt, considerably greater, and there small differences of opinion, accordingly, have sometimes occurred. Upon more minute reflection, however, we have frequently found reason to prefer the judgment of the students to our own; and it is certainly, highly honourable to the candour and ingenuousness of youth to state that, with few exceptions, neither friendship, nor enmity, nor national feeling has ever distinguished the right order of determination. With regard to the first prize indeed, about which the emotions of rivalry, and envy are the most warmly excited, it is often awarded to strangers, in preference to friends and brothers. It may be thought singular, but it is true, that, in the course of many years, not above one or two complaints have ever been made to us, founded on the suspicion of impropriety or injustice, in relation to this matter; and there can be no doubt that there would have been many complaints every

year, if the determination had rested with the tutors.

When the prizes are all voted, the teacher brings the business to a close, by addressing the successful and disappointed, respectively, in such terms of approbation, sympathy, and kindness as the occasion seems to require.

We have now explained, and with too much minuteness, perhaps, the method of conducting the studies of those who enter upon a course of philosophical education. The great object of this course it will have appeared, is to combine the communication of such elementary knowledge as may seem necessary for furthering the subsequent pursuits of the students with a system of exercises, calculated to form, in their minds, those intellectual habits which are indispensable to the cultivation of science and to the business of active life. And we have no hesitation in adding, that every system of public education which does not proceed on this principle, and embrace those means of improvement, is greatly and radically defective. It is hoped, too, that the manner of conducting the practical business of the classes is calculated, in some degree, to infuse into the minds of students such spirit and emulation as will sweeten labour, and stimulate to the highest degree of exertion in performing the tasks assigned them. It is farther claimed for this plan of conducting philosophical education, that it secures many of the advantages of private, or domestic education, whilst it obviates some, at least, of the evils which are supposed incident to a public one. We do not here mean to enter into a comparison between private and public instruction—a question much agitated both in ancient and in modern times—our object is to show, what has been much less attended to than it ought, that the principal advantages of each may, to a considerable extent, be united, without involving any sacrifice of either.

For instance, in this mode of education, a close and intimate connexion is established between the studies of the evening and the exhibitions of the student the following day. It is understood, as a solemn stipulation entered into, betwixt the tutor and his pupils, at the commencement of the session, that a certain portion of time shall be set apart, every evening to be employed in preparing for the public appearance of the following day. For the faithful employment of this time, the students are held strictly responsible to their teacher: and, from the daily examinations, as well as from the written exercises, which, during the session are required almost every day, he knows exactly what preparation has been made, and whether the preceding evening has been properly occupied. Whenever, also, he perceives, in any individual, symptoms of failure, or relaxation, he puts the question directly, in the presence of all the classes, how the evening was spent, and demands a specific answer.

Again when, themes are prescribed which require five or six days for their execution, the students are requested, when half that time is expired, to produce their essays in an unfinished state, that a judgment may be formed of the progress which has been made. This expedient is intended, of course, as a check upon the idle, and to secure to them their application, in the intervening space, and chiefly indeed, to prevent all the students from trusting, as young persons are very apt to trust, to a hasty preparation at the last moment. In this way, the tutor exercises a superintendence over the private studies of his pupils, directs, to a certain extent, their course of reading; and possesses in no small degree, from his daily scrutiny, the means of checking and stimulating the thoughtless and indolent, even when they are out of his sight.

It is another good effect of this system too, that it places the students in such circumstances, with regard to the sense of shame, and respect for character, that they stand nearly as much in awe of one another as of the tutor, and are impressed, in both cases, with a corresponding responsibility, as to improvement in their studies, and general good conduct. Their public appearances are made, every day, in the presence of the whole school, and they know that, at a period not very far distant, much will depend upon the opinion which shall have been formed of their regularity, their attention and progress. Whilst engaged in study, during the evening hours, it is impossible, but that they must look forward to their appearance the next day, in the presence of a numerous band of class-fellows, eagerly exerting themselves in the same field of competition, and of a teacher zealously interested in their success. All these circumstances combined, constitute perhaps a stronger and more natural species of restraint on the minds of ingenuous and spirited youth, than that which arises from the watchfulness of private tuition; and are certainly better suited to prepare the pupil for the business of the world, when he will have much competition to encounter, and where he cannot always avail himself of the assistance of a tutor. That place of instruction is unquestionably the best, which has the most direct tendency to make the student instruct himself, to put him in the proper track for acquiring knowledge, to inspire confidence in his own exertions, and to lead him to take pleasure in the activity of his own mind. When these objects are gained, the most valuable and the most difficult part of education is accomplished.

It will occur to most readers, as an advantage resulting from the system of education and discipline now explained, that it must obviate in a great measure, the effects of bad example so commonly deplored, wherever there is a concourse of young persons in public seminaries. Perhaps the charges of vice and idleness, brought against such schools are greatly exaggerated; and it is very certain, on

the other hand, that these evils, viewed with a reference to youth, are not confined to public schools. We have not any intention of repeating, in this place, what has already been frequently advanced on this important subject, that, as boys cannot be shut up all their lives, and must meet with vice in their passage through the world, it is of little consequence whether they become acquainted with the ways of men a year sooner or later; that there are vices, perhaps equally dangerous to be encountered even under the parental roof, notwithstanding every degree of restraint and watchfulness; and that the evils attending a public education, as they are more easily discovered, so are they more easily corrected. It is idleness and want of interest, in the pursuits wherein young people are engaged which most commonly lead to irregularity and faulty conduct in students. Take away these, inspire a love for study, and create industrious habits, and you will at once supersede the *disgraceful rod*, and render obsolete all penal statutes. Occupy the student's time, and use means to make him feel the spirit of emulation, respect for his own character, and reverence for his teacher, and you will thereby abridge the labour of discipline, as far as regards regularity and decorum. These are principles upon which we endeavour to act in our school, and it is creditable to the character of youth, to have it to observe that, they are in most cases completely efficacious.

We are afraid it may be thought by some, that neither the teacher nor the pupil can be supposed to execute the parts assigned them in this plan of instruction. Formidable, however, as the task may appear at first sight, it will be found, on nearer inspection, that nothing is required of either which demands more than ordinary talents, zeal and industry. Let it be remembered, at the same time, that the duties of teachers are more laborious and extensive than are commonly imagined; and that they cannot be fully discharged by devoting one or two hours a day to their performance. He has, or ought to have, a definite object in view, and this object ought to regulate his hours of teaching in public, and his labours in private. A very great difference of opinion seems to have taken place on the subject of late, compared with the views and practice of the ancient philosophers; for, while the latter are known to have spent many years in patiently training their youth in the mysteries of their profession, the former have brought the business of philosophic education within the compass of a *nut shell*, by confining their labours to instruction, one or two hours a day, during the session. This practice, to say the least of it, is most irrational and ridiculous. To attempt to teach young people to think and reason, and more particularly, to form in their minds the intellectual habits upon which reasoning, speaking, and writ-

ing depend, by means of a few lessons only, is more absurd and ridiculous still.

We are aware that those observations will be ridiculed and criticised by a certain tribe of *literary speculators* who are imposing upon the credulity of the unthinking part of the community. But any thing they can say, will not induce us to shrink from the discharge of our duty. We know, that if base and malignant teachers are against us, the virtuous, enlightened and honourable, supported by a wise and discriminating public, are with us. The more the envious and interested *rave* and condemn the system of philosophic education, the more they will strengthen and support it, by inducing an inquiry into its principles. Truth must ultimately triumph; and error, with its concomitant, ignorance, be driven out of the teacher's chair.

SCHOOLS.

Mr. Frederick Prince, editor of the Cayuga Republican, a paper which has done much for education in this state, observes that "A society has been organised by an assembly of school teachers in the town of Scipio, which merits publicity. It is styled the 'Literary Society of the town of Scipio.' Its object is to excite emulation in the several schools, by awarding premiums to the most deserving. The premiums are to be presented to the teachers, at a public meeting of the society, and to consist of books and rewards suitable to be presented, by them, to their most deserving scholars."

"No other plan so admirably calculated to improve the condition of common schools, by exciting a spirit of emulation and rivalry, has come to our knowledge. It is hoped that those in other towns, who feel an interest in the education of youth, will promote the establishment of similar societies. Proprietors of schools should step forward to their support. A few shillings thus given will turn to more account, than dollars paid to an indolent or unskilful teacher."

In some of the preceding numbers of our work, we hinted at the utility, nay, necessity of a society of this kind, and it is with heart-felt satisfaction, that we see it at length, carried into execution. We have no doubt in our minds of the essential benefits that will immediately and ultimately accrue to the citizens of Scipio from this institution, in which will be concentrated all the scholastic talent of the town, and which will eventually give an impulse to instruction in a great portion of the western part of this state. But we sincerely hope, that its effect will extend to other states, and that the teachers of our country, many of whom are men of the most splendid talents and extensive information, will, by their combined energies, raise the profession to a rank among those which are termed the learned; and by their successful efforts, after operating a total change in the general system of instruction, maintain its dignity.

Among those of our scholastic brethren who have given a tone to this important subject, and commanded the attention of the public, by the exercise of talents, and information, are Messrs. E. Howard of Auburn, of this state, and Lemuel Shattuck of Detroit, and many others whose names we do not now recollect.—James R. Pynneo, Esq. an inspector of common schools, with several other gentlemen are doing much for education.—We rejoice to find those capacitated to execute and dignify the most important trust, exerting their zeal in its cause. Among those who have done much for Academical Institutions, is his excellency Dewitt Clinton, whose talents command the admiration even of Europe.

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OUTLINES OF PHILOSOPHIC EDUCATION.

On the extension of this mode of Teaching.

IT will require but little reflection to satisfy a candid mind, that the method of teaching which is found successful, in the earlier branches of education, will, with a few modifications, apply to the more advanced departments of it; for it is abundantly manifest that, as the same faculties of the mind are employed at every stage of philosophic investigation, the same principles of reasoning must be called in, to guide their operation, and a similar mode of training be adopted to invigorate their powers. In passing from one department to another, there is only a change of object, a different set of materials to work upon; the intellectual instrument, the mental processes of analysis, discrimination and arrangement remaining unchanged. Whether the subject matter upon which the attention is fixed, be Logic, Ethics, or Physics, the method of teaching will imply only a slight change, as to the way in which the professor exerts his talents and influence on the one, and in which the students employ their abilities and industry on the other.

Perhaps, the greatest difficulty is already overcome, and the chief obstacle to this plan of instruction removed, by the exertion made in the elementary classes, to form habits of *thinking*, and, to create a love for study. In the formation of all habits, whether bodily or strictly mental, the first efforts are the least agreeable, and require, of course the most unremitting endeavours on the part of both *teacher* and pupil whence it follows, that, whatever progress is made at this stage, in acquiring the use of the intellectual powers, and in deriving pleasure from their exercise, will proportionably facilitate the advancement of the student in all his subsequent pursuits. His acquisitions in this field may be regarded as a free stock, ready to be employed in any future undertaking.

Still, there is some reason to apprehend, that the indolence or vanity of teachers will supply them with powerful objections to this plan of study. The daily examinations of the students, on the subjects discussed in their hearing, and the perusal of their *theses* in private, with the view of reporting on them in the class, are employments of more drudgery than fame, and afford not the same opportunity for the display of technical learning, eloquence, or ingenuity, as it is enjoyed by him, who is known only to his pupils in the character of a *divine*, *doctor*, *lawyer*, or a mere *lecturer*. To submit to the labour of teaching would be to put him-

self on a level with the industrious teacher and artist, who are compelled to sacrifice a large portion of their time to the fatiguing duty of using all kinds of precept and example, with the view of instructing the learner to perform what they themselves profess, and what they undertake to communicate. But, without repeating what has been again and again said on this head, we still maintain that, without imitating, to a certain extent, the examples now mentioned, no tutor or professor can discharge his duty with facility and success.

The professors of moral and natural philosophy enjoy considerable advantages, in carrying on, in their respective classes, a plan of study similar to that which has now been described. The subjects of their lectures present to the minds of youth, comparatively stronger motives and allurements to study. The various powers of action which are analysed in the ethic class, such as instincts, appetites, desires, affections, and passions; the origin of moral sentiments; the developement of those energetic principles which animate and impel the vast mechanism of human society; the grounds and distinctions of good and evil, of praise and of blame; the sources of depraved taste in the public mind, with the remedy, or antidote; the opinions of learned men in ancient and modern times, relative to the obligation of virtue; the qualities of mind and of action, in which it consists; and the ultimate standard of excellence, as applicable to all ages and nations—these, and other similar inquiries, take a firmer hold of the youthful imagination than abstract discussions on the generation of ideas, and on the means of intellectual culture. Theoretical views and speculations too, on the principles of government, of jurisprudence, and the history of civil society, afford ample scope for eloquence, and admit of various and very interesting illustration. In like manner, the subjects of natural philosophy, the beauty, the grandeur, and sublimity of the material world, are well calculated to gratify curiosity, and to prompt investigation. The application of analysis and induction to the phenomena of *nature*, and to the interpretation of her laws, cannot fail to prove a delightful employment to the inquisitive student: and, in one word, the professors or tutors will find no difficulty in arranging a proper system of exercise and mental culture, suited to the circumstances of the young persons under their charge.

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